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A Stitch In War Time

A broadcast by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, Thursday, September 10, 1942, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, over stations associated with the Blue Network.

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Now for news on the home front. Here's Ruth Van Deman back with us again, bring the latest work from the home economics laboratories of the Department of Agriculture.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, you might say wearing the latest word. See the sleeves in my sweater here---

KADDERLY:

What about them? They look just like regular sleeves---just like the rest of the sweater.

VAN DEMAN:

You don't see any darns at the elbows?

KADDERLY:

No, not a sign---

VAN DEMAN:

Well, they're there--preventive darns, where the knitting was wearing thin. If you can't see them that's thanks to Clarice Scott and smart women working with her.

KADDERLY:

You mean they did this neat elbow job for you?

VAN DEMAN:

Goodness no. They're not a personal service outfit.

KADDERLY:

I thought maybe they were using you as a guinea pig.

VAN DEMAN:

Not this time. But they do plenty of practicing before they put out their how-to-do it directions. On my sweater I followed their latest--their 'Mending ABC's.'

KADDERLY:

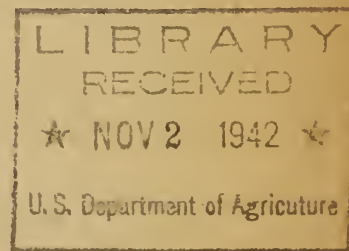
That the leaflet you have there in your hand?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes--- Anything you want mended, Wallace?

KADDERLY:

Look out--I tore a good shirt on the fence the other day.



(over)

VAN DEMAN:

What kind of a tear was it?

KADDERLY:

A big, bad tear - down this way and across this way.

VAN DEMAN:

A three cornered tear probably. What was the shirt made of--what kind of goods?

KADDERLY:

Cotton striped stuff---fine stripes, close together--gray and white.

VAN DEMAN:

You were lucky, Wallace.

KADDERLY:

Lucky to ~~tear~~ a good shirt?

VAN DEMAN:

No, lucky it was made of striped material. A new piece can be set in so you'll hardly know it.

KADDERLY:

Where will the piece come from?

VAN DEMAN:

Off the tail of the shirt. You won't miss it. It's amazing how you can find a piece to patch almost any kind of a garment by snipping off a little piece in the hem, or a seam edge, or some place it won't show. ----And as for how to mend a three corner tear, look there in Miss Scott's leaflet.

KADDERLY:

Three cornered tear - page 9 - so the index says --- Yes, here it is the complete how-to-do-it-- even to pictures.

VAN DEMAN:

Pictures help a lot. They show just how to place the patch, how to set the stitches.

KADDERLY:

What's this reweaving - this invisible mending - we hear about? Is that some special kind of mending?

VAN DEMAN:

It's no secret process, if that's what you mean. It's just very skillful darning over and under, back and forth, with threads that exactly match the goods. The stitches are laid in so carefully they look like the original weave.

KADDERLY:

Then any body can do it?

VAN DEMAN:

Any body who takes time and has the patience to do very careful work. Also one needs a steady hand and a strong light. But reweaving isn't a bit more exacting than lots of the fine stitches women used to put into needlepoint and all sorts of embroidered doilies and what not. Of course they're doing that to satisfy the urge to create something.

KADDERLY:

But now we have the urge to conserve--- Take those fine stitches you put into your sweater sleeves, Ruth. That's reinforcement for the duration.

VAN DEMAN:

I hope so. That sweater came from Scotland. And there'll probably be no more like it coming across the Atlantic until the war's over. Clothes for soldiers have first call on wool supplies.

KADDERLY:

Very true. The knitting mills, the weaving machines, the garment factories - are jammed with war orders. It's taking more clothes than we ever dreamed of to outfit the men in service. Clothes for sub-zero weather in arctic regions--- clothes for sub-tropical wear in the desert---clothes for dry weather---wet weather - every possible kind of weather.

VAN DEMAN:

So the very least we can do here at home is to make everything we have last as long as it will.

KADDERLY:

Jumping back a minute to that reweaving business, Ruth. What puzzles me is where you get the matching threads to weave with.

VAN DEMAN:

That's generally easy. Ravel them out of a new piece of the material - if you happen to have a scrap. Or if it's a readymade suit, or coat, or dress, you can ravel some threads from a seam edge inside the garment. I've even seen short fibers, like lint, raveled out of an edge, filled into a small moth hole or a tiny burned place and darned in with hair.

KADDERLY:

Hair - you mean hair from the head?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, hair from a woman's head. It's stronger than you think.

KADDERLY:

That is ingenious.

VAN DEMAN:

That's what the smart mender has to be---ingenious about finding ways to put back into the cloth what was worn away or torn or burned away - and putting it back so skillfully you can't see where it was gone.

KADDERLY:

Sounds like magic -

VAN DEMAN:

No, like science, it's just common sense organized---starting with the mending basket, with needles--thread---many kinds of patches, perhaps some of the press-on thermo-plastic patches.

KADDERLY:

Thermo-plastic patches? They're something else now---to me anyway.

VAN DEMAN:

You can buy them at lots of stores - at the notion counter. They're cloth treated with some kind of stickum that takes hold when you press it over the hole with a warm iron.

KADDERLY:

Kind of a first-aid dressing for torn places in cloth.

VAN DEMAN:

They're more than that. They'll really do a permanent mending job on some kinds of material.

Another modern trend in mending is the way women use their sewing machines for darning-in patches on work clothes, and children's play suits, where extra strength is needed.

KADDERLY:

Miss Scott give the how-to-do-it on that too, in her new leaflet?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, it's all down there, Wallace, in word and in picture and free for the asking to anybody who wants to enlist in the clothing conservation corps.

KADDERLY:

Good enough--- Farm and Home friends, that's another offer from the Bureau of Home Economics. (ad lib offer "Mending ABC's")

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